

in a tough spot; they needed a little help; they got the help; and they got off welfare; and they went on with their lives. But it is true that about half the people were more or less permanently dependent on it. Those are the ones that will be harder to place. So we've got to get another million people, and they're going to be harder to place. And we have got to have your help.

So that's the last thing I will say. I want you to help us balance the budget. I want you to support the education standards movement, not just in the Congress but asking the States that you operate in to embrace these tests, not letting anybody run away. I want you to help us continue to lead the world with fast-track and a decent diplomatic budget. And I want every one of you to ask yourselves personally, what can we do in our company to end the cycle of welfare dependency? If we do this we will have done a thing of historic significance for the American people, because it will end the culture of poverty. There will always be people who are out of work, but no one will be looked at as a permanent dependent of the State if they're able-bodied, if you do your part and we do ours.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:32 a.m. in the ballroom at the Park Hyatt Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Larry Bossidy, the Business Council chairman.

Statement on the Domestic Reduction in Deaths From AIDS *February 27, 1997*

I was greatly encouraged by today's report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on the historic reduction in the number of Americans dying of AIDS, further evidence that this terrible epidemic is beginning to yield to our sustained national public health investment in AIDS research, prevention, and care.

In these last 4 years, we have steadily increased our national commitment to fighting HIV and AIDS. We have increased funding for the programs by more than 50 percent, developed the first-ever national AIDS strategy, accelerated approval of successful new

AIDS drugs by the Food and Drug Administration, strengthened and focused the Office of AIDS Research at the National Institutes of Health, and created a White House Office of National AIDS Policy.

We have made good progress, but it is also clear that the AIDS epidemic is not over. We must continue to press ahead if we are to meet our ultimate goal—the end to this epidemic, a cure for those who are living with HIV, and a vaccine to protect everyone from this virus.

That is why I am so pleased that the Department of Health and Human Services is today releasing another \$202 million in funds under the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act to provide high-quality treatment to people living in 49 U.S. cities. Funds for the CARE act have increased 158 percent over the last 4 years and the number of cities receiving this assistance has grown from 26 to 49. While we will continue to care for those who are already sick, we must also sustain our commitment to prevention. The only way that we can assure that a person will not die of AIDS is to make sure they don't become infected with HIV in the first place.

Today's report is very good news, but we must not relax our efforts. In the months and years ahead, we must continue to work together as a nation to further our progress against this deadly epidemic, and while we do so, we must remember that every person who is living with HIV or AIDS is someone's son or daughter, brother or sister, parent or grandparent. They deserve our respect and they need our love.

Proclamation 6974—Irish-American Heritage Month, 1997

February 27, 1997

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

Throughout the history of the United States, from the founding of our republic to the modern spread of our cultural influence around the globe, American life has been enriched continuously by the contributions of Irish Americans.